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The
"Elect Infant Clause"
and
The Overture from the Presbytery of Suwannee

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By
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A Member of the Presbytery

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By

Wm. E. Boggs, D.D., LL.D.

A Member of the Presbytery

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1—*WHAT IS DESIRED.*

The Presbytery of Suwannee in session at Live Oak, Fla., April 15, 1908, unanimously adopted and ordered to be forwarded to the General Assembly the following overture:

> "The Presbytery of Suwannee respectfully overtures this General Assembly which is to meet in Greensboro, N. C., May 21, 1908, to send down to the Presbyteries for their consideration and adoption the following substitute for Chapter X, Sec. 3, of the Confession of Faith."
>
> "III. All children dying in their infancy are, as we confidently believe, through the sovereign, electing grace of God given to Christ, to be redeemed by His blood and regenerated by His spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth, and likewise are all other persons who, because of mental infirmity continuing through life, are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."
>
> "In support of this change the Presbytery would suggest these reasons, *namely:*

(1) The matter is already before the assembly and the church because of action taken by honored brethren in other parts of our territory.

"(2) This substitute does not in one syllable contradict the time-honored symbols of our faith, but seeks to expand the identical truth which is more succinctly expressed therein.

"(3) The proposed substitute expresses the exact belief of our ministers and people as it is taught in our pulpits and in our literature.

"(4) The substitute will, as we think, once and forever silence the calumnies that have been ceaselessly poured upon our creed and church; whereas we apprehend that nothing else will certainly effect this result."

So far as these appended reasons are concerned it may be proper to add that the Presbytery modestly shelters itself from any appearance of presumption, being so small among the thousands of our Israel, in thus calling the attention of a great church to a confessedly difficult and a much controverted matter. The non-contradiction of the amendment with the doctrine already taught in our confession is conceded, as shall in due time be made apparent, by the declarations of two Assemblies. The third reason being too well known to require proof, it is well to observe that in the last all that Presbytery suggests has reference solely to the special abuse reaped upon our creed and church about the "Elect Infant Clause." It has nothing whatever to propose about reconciling all non- Calvinistic brethren to our views in general. But it intimates that in its opinion our belief on this subject might be so formulated that no self-respecting man, no matter what be his sentiments about Calvinism in general, can possibly

so speak of our teaching about Infant Salvation as to make us odious in the eyes of some sincere Christians who lack the opportunity to ascertain for themselves what we really hold. And this end is not unworthy of our consideration and action. It falls into line with the Apostolic precept: "Let not your good be evil spoken of."

The Presbytery's reasons may, however, be justly criticised for failing to bring out clearly two very important considerations which sustain the overture—the comforting authoritatively given by the church herself to the many heart-broken parents within her own communion and bringing up her credal testimony more fully to the information given in our Supreme Standard, God's holy word, with regard to the salvation of that immense multitude of human beings who die before attaining the condition of moral accountability. For while it is unquestionably true that in seeking to give comfort to bereaved parents our pastors do habitually go beyond the exact form of expression found in Chapter X, Section III, (which, it is claimed, while not *denying* the salvation of any child dying in infancy, yet *intentionally* falls short of "a positive statement" that *all* such are in fact saved.) Of course, then, such *additional teaching* by the pastor can be no more than his private belief as to the fair and just meaning of God's word on this deeply important matter. But ought not the church herself to speak with her united voice, provided she in no wise goes *beyond* the Scriptures? Two Assemblies have said that a stronger statement *might* be given which will yet be in accord with the Supreme Standard. And her people are in effect advised to frame such beliefs for their private use, as shall be shown in the very words of the Assembly of 1901.

And yet a consideration of even higher import is found in the obligation of a church to bring her creed on all important matters into complete accord with the

oracles of God. On such subjects she is bound to speak in language that neither adds to nor takes away from that which God has put on record. And is not the matter of Infant Salvation one of vast importance? True the church is not used in their salvation as in any sense the instrument, through her sacraments or otherwise, in effecting God's sovereign purpose toward these little ones. But how tremendously this information in Holy Scripture must affect our apprehension of the effects produced by the mission of Christ to our world! How greatly does it modify our conception of the population of heaven! The best available statistics estimate the total population of the globe at about 1,500,000,000 souls. And, the length of a generation being about 30 years, perhaps a fraction more because of improved sanitary conditions in Christian lands, about three times this vast throng passes through the gates of death in 100 years—4,500,000,000. But of these at least one-half are estimated to be children of five years or under—2,250,000,000 then enter heaven in a century, at the present rate of mortality. This gives in one year 22,500,000 children translated to heaven; or in one month 1,875,000; in one day 62,500; 2,604 every hour; and 46 in each minute! In such a mighty question should our creed not come up exactly to the information which is given us by the Divine Spirit? And of course we should be equally scrupulous not to cause our human document to give testimony beyond that which the spirit has given.

2—HITHERTO DENIED AND WHY?

Similar overtures have hitherto been denied by the Assembly. Let us therefore carefully ascertain the reason of this as given by the Assembly itself, that each of us may be thus qualified to decide for himself whether or not the refusal was wise and right.

The authority to initiate and to conclude the process for amending our creed as may be ascertained from the Book of Church Order, Chap. VII, Sec. III.

> "Amendments to the Confession of Faith and the Catechism of this Church may be made only upon the recommendation of our General Assembly, the concurrence of three-fourths of the Presbyteries, and the enactment of the same by a subsequent Assembly."

Adverse action has been taken three times by our General Assembly, and of course the movement for a change in "The Elect Infant Clause" has thus been checked. Not having a file of the Assembly's Minutes at hand, I shall copy from Dr. Webb's recent work, "The Theology of Infant Salvation," p. 307.

"In 1900 its General Assembly declined to make any change," i. e., to initiate process looking to change.

> "Inasmuch as the present language of the Confession cannot, by any fair interpretation, be construed to teach that any of those who die in infancy are lost."—Min. p. 614.

Conceding of course, and most sincerely, this interpretation of the much disputed "Elect Infant Clause" to be the only one accepted in our Church, it is yet open to us all to doubt the propriety of retaining in a public document a paragraph that is unsatisfactory to many in our communion, because it expresses only a part of what they believe to be taught in our Supreme Standard, the Holy Scripture—less than all of us fully believe to be so revealed—less than we habitually and openly teach with the sanction, too, of subsequent assemblies, as will be shown below.

To a similar overture the next assembly, as cited by Dr. Webb, makes the same reply accompanied by more extended reasons, *namely:*

> "1. Because it is unwise to initiate at this time the agitation of this question among our people.
>
> "2. Because no modification that does not eliminate the Scriptural Calvinism from this section of the Confession will obviate the objections, which come from Arminian sources.
>
> "3. Because the Westminster Confession of Faith is the first great creed which taught the salvation of infants dying in infancy, on truly Scriptural grounds.
>
> "4. Because the Confession of Faith in this section does not teach the damnation of any infants dying in infancy for the reason that the contrast made in it is not between elect and non-elect infants dying in infancy, but between elect persons who die in infancy and elect persons who do not die in infancy.
>
> "5. Because while we have a well-grounded hope, founded on Scripture, that all infants dying in infancy are saved, yet the Confession goes as far as the Scriptures justify a positive credal statement." Min. p. 59.

Here again one is permitted, with due respect to this venerable body of beloved brethren, to offer comment as follows: So far as the first four reasons are concerned, granting the correctness of them all, they yet fail to touch the main point at issue in this friendly discussion. That point is: *Does the paragraph really say all that Scripture teaches on this great subject?* And to this inquiry the Assembly itself says that this paragraph does *not* say all

that God teaches in his word. And it gives a *reason* for this failure to say all that the spirit has revealed.

1. Now, with regard to these reasons, one may be permitted to make this respectful reply: Granting all that is said in the first four paragraphs, they really do not touch the *main consideration* in this friendly discussion which is: "Does the 'Elect Infant Clause' fully and completely reflect the contents of Scripture on this great matter?"

2. And, furthermore, it may be deferentially suggested that the timeliness of a request which we deny is not very apt to appear to us just then. But inasmuch as more shall be said presently, but now let us note the fact that the Assembly together with this admission gives intimation that all of us, ministers and people, are justified in holding personally more truth on this subject—more of *Scriptural truth,* let it be understood, than is now expressed in our Subordinate Standard—more in fact than that Assembly is willing, for a reason assigned by it, to recommend to the Presbyteries.

Now, as to the *timeliness or untimeliness* of proposing a change, of course all who for any reason oppose the change naturally consider the discussion of it more or less untimely; and those who favor the change are apt to consider it timely.

It would, moreover, be unreasonable to expect that the change herein sought would reconcile our brethren of non-Calvinistic creeds to our doctrine. And let it be remembered that Arminians are not the only critics of our credal statement, as any one may see for himself who reads Dr. Krauth's "Conservative Reformation" (Lutheran). No such idea has entered our minds. All that we expect is to remove a form of expression which seems peculiarly liable to awaken resentment against our church

and to engender misunderstandings with regard to our creed. This is all. And we hold that by stating exactly what we all hold to be the purport of the Scriptures, ("when fairly interpreted," to borrow the Assembly's happy statement of the case,) as to Infant Salvation, we shall plant ourselves on such firm ground that no self-respecting man will care to repeat such slanders.

As for the creditable fact that our Confession *first* of all the great creeds made a statement of how those dying in infancy are saved according to Scripture, it is easy to see that church history, and not the creed itself, should hand down that knowledge to posterity. Let the creed give the exact information found in Scripture, and let history tell her story correctly.

Again, admitting in good faith that our church here honestly expresses in her highest court, the interpretation which she places on the paragraph in question, and that she has never consented to the suggestion that her creed admits that some dead infants are lost, let us pass on to consider *the reason* of the Assembly in 1901 for not recommending that we so amend the "Elect Infant Clause" as to say exactly what Scripture teaches in all its fullness. This reason is as follows:

> *"Yet the Confession of Faith goes as far as the Scriptures justify a positive credal statement."*

Observe that the Assembly fully and explicitly states that the Scripture goes so far as to give us *"A well-grounded hope, that all infants dying in infancy are saved."* And the next Assembly, (that of 1902,) concurs fully by using these words:

> "This Assembly is fully persuaded that the language employed, in Chap. X, Sec. 3, of our Confession of Faith, touching infants dying in infancy, does

> not teach that there are any infants dying in infancy that are damned, but is only meant to show that those who die in infancy are saved in a different manner from adult persons, who are capable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. *Furthermore, we are persuaded that the Holy Scriptures when fairly interpreted, amply warrant us in believing that all infants who die in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit."*—Min. p. 265.

The italics are mine, for the purpose of bringing into due prominence the agreement of this Assembly with what is asked in the overture from Suwannee Presbytery. However, admitting the fact that on the great subject of Infant Salvation our Confession does *not* express quite all of the information that Scripture supplies, it joins in refusing like the two previous Assemblies to send down the matter to the Presbyteries. Dr. Webb does not cite anything more and, my copy of the Minutes for 1902 being mislaid, nothing more can be reproduced at present. We must, therefore, be content with a thorough examination of the reason given in 1901." *"As far as the Scriptures justify a positive credal statement."* The words evidently form the premise of an argument styled *"An enthymeme,"* that is, an argument which is partly *"in the mind,"* not being written out in full. But it may be readily written out in full and would then be:

Major—All credal statements must be (or are) positive statements.

Minor—But the information given in Scripture as to the salvation of infants who die in infancy is not a positive statement.

Conclusion—Therefore the information given in

Scripture as to infants who die in infancy cannot be (is not) a credal statement.

The argument is regular in the Figure A. E. E. and is valid in form. The Minor premise may be safely neglected so far as this examination is concerned. But on what ground does it assert that: *"All credal statements must be positive statements?"* No proof is given of its truth. But premises should not be assumed without evidence of their being true. (1) Is this premise given as an "Intuitive judgment of the understanding?" "Every change has its producing cause" is such an "Intuitive judgment." Is the premise in question like it? The tests of an "Intuitive judgment" are thus stated "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus" (That which is held always, everywhere, and by all men.) Of course: "All credal statements are positive statements" is lacking in these elements. (2) Is it, then, inherent in the very conception of creeds or confessions of faith that they must of necessity contain "positive statements and no other sort? We take the word "creed" and inquire what is its meaning? Of what is it composed? The dictionary makes reply that it is derived from the Latin word "credo," I believe. A creed, then, (until the contrary is proved) is safely held to be *a thing believed* or a *collection* of such things. There is no intimation as to how *"positive"* or how problematical each of its contents may be. And a "Confession of Faith" is precisely a *confession of things, truths, that are believed by the persons or church* that adopts the document in question. Nothing is stipulated as to how *"positive"* its contents must be. (3) But is the premise in question given by the Holy Scriptures? Has God said that "All credal statements must be positive statements?" To ask the question is to insure a negative answer. (4) And finally, is this premise demanded by any regulation in the document itself?

If so, where is the regulation found? As to the rule for introducing amendments into the confession, a true copy has been given in this writing, and may be examined. It will be found to say nothing about *"positive* credal statements. And so it is if we turn to Chap. I, Sec. VI of the document, which is as follows:

> "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; to which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the spirit, or traditions of men," etc.

Now, the application made in this regulation itself is immensely wider than to mere creed-making—*"Man's salvation, faith and life."* Creed-making may be considered a part of a Presbyterian's "life." And so also would be the composition and publication, whether orally or in print, of what we term *"theology."* It may possibly be a perception of this wide application which prompted our worthy brother, Dr. Webb, to prefer to seek support for his "iron-bound rule" for creed-making by a cross-inference from the definition of an "Offence" in our Rules of Discipline. And certainly it behooves us all to inquire how far Chap. I, Sec. 3, of the Confession would tend to abridge our speculations under the caption of "Calvinistic Theology."

But the limit here given to *"faith and life"* herein is that it is: "Either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." And the words "by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" plainly refer to the operations of that power in our minds which *com-*

pares things, *judges* concerning things, and *infers* one truth from another. In other words it is the "Comparative, Judging or Reasoning Power," as Hamilton and others technically describe it. It is not the subject-matter of the information given us in nature or in Scripture which is here dealt with. But rather the manner in which we judge or reason about them. The subject-matter may be simple or qualified; it may be made known to us as *possible,* or as *probable,* or as *certain.* But when we handle this information by the Comparative or Judging or Reasoning Power *the process itself, the activity of this Thought Power,* must be so regulated according to the "Laws of Thought," as to be a "good and necessary consequence" from this information. We must in the process neither add to nor take away from that original information whether it be given us in the facts of nature or in the statements of Holy Scripture. Our fathers were acquainted well with Logic. And generally they used their knowledge with logical skill.

And hence, returning to the matter in hand, if the Divine Spirit is pleased to put any information into the form of expression that makes the thing *certainly and infallibly known,* we must so receive it, and so handle it by the Logical Power. If, on the other hand, the spirit be pleased so to express his mind as to make a thing to be *possible or probable in one of its various shades of probability,* in that very form we are to deal with it. And if we think of it, or speak of it at all, we must think of it and speak of it in that precise form, neither adding to nor taking from the exact information which we have received from God through his Holy Word. And when this subject-matter concerns the salvation of children dying in their infancy, we must receive it exactly as God gives it in his word; *as certain,* if he so gives it; *as probable,* if such be his pleasure. And when we undertake to

form judgments or to reason about it, we must not change probability to certainty, nor certainty to probability. But complying with *"The Laws of Thought,"* we must form probable premises, draw probable conclusions, and from certain premises we must draw certain conclusions. Logical "consequence" is applicable alike to all such processes. And hence the words of Chap. I, Sec. III, have nothing to do whatever with the *form* in which God is pleased to give to such information as he makes down in his word, but to logical sequence.

3. *What defect is there in "The Elect Infant Clause" which might and should be remedied?*

To see this rightly and convincingly we must submit the famous clause to an impartial and searching examination. Here is the clause itself as it now stands in the Confession, Chap. X, Sec. 3:

> "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are saved by Christ through the spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth."

That this clause is in fact somewhat obscure might, I think, be safely inferred from the varying impressions produced on different minds that are to be held as honest and well-meaning until the contrary is proven of them. This is the judgment not only of charity, but also of common sense as applied in the courts of law. However, this, I feel sure, can be quite positively asserted of the much-belabored clause.

(1) It asserts that members of the class "Infants who die in infancy" are "elected," "regenerated" and "saved."

(2) That all such are thus saved by Christ.

(3) That in effecting this work the Redeemer makes use of the Holy Spirit's power—No doubt in virtue of an agreement between these two sovereign persons in the Godhead.

(4) But when we inquire *how many, what proportion of this class of infants dying in infancy are so saved?* the answers differ:

(1) Our beloved and honored church tells us that she in adopting the work of the Westminster Divines has never undertaken to specify exactly what proportion of the class are thus "elected," "regenerated" and "saved." She believes that all, according to her Supreme Standard, (the Holy Scripture), are thus "elected" and "saved," but she does not see her way clear to *say so in her creed.* And her "credal statement," therefore is, as she understands and believes an *"Indefinite"* or *"Indesignate"* proposition, because it has an "Indefinite" or "Indesignate" *subject* ("Infants dying in infancy").

(2) Others have said "Your statement necessarily implies that some infants dying in infancy are not saved. Your language admits of the inference that there are babes in perdition—only a span long." To them our church has ever replied with horror and indignation: "You slander God's people and speak falsely." As to the *intention* of the church in the use of the words, all of her children are perfectly agreed. She reveals her real thought and purpose in adopting the "credal statement" in question.

(3) But suppose that we summon a disinterested party to take advice on this question: "What can be done in the interests of God's peace as among brethren? And what can be done to place in the creed not only a more unambiguous statement of the information given in the Holy Scriptures?" Let that disinterested person be

Logic then, and let us observe her procedure. She will insist upon an analysis of the "Elect Infant Clause" as the first step. "To bring out into the light what is exactly the logical proposition in your controverted clause, I must know what is your subject and what is the predicate, and should there be more than one of them I must know each of them. The subject is always that term about which the affirmation is made, whether it be positive or negative. In this clause it is surely *'Infants?'* And that term or those terms by which some things affirmed of 'infants,' I find to be *four,* "Elect," "dying in infancy," "regenerated" and "saved." True enough in this clause "Elect," (short form of 'elected,') is for purposes of emphasis written before the subject 'Infants," but I will write it logically after 'Infants.' And I think that I discover already that its older position has helped to confuse the sentence. However, there is one of these predicates that seems to exercise a sort of influence over the application of the others—"dying in infancy," to note this peculiarity I will place it in a "Relative clause." Then my proposition will take this shape: "Infants who die in infancy are in the class of persons having these marks—' Elected,' 'Regenerated' and 'Saved.'

"Now this is precisely the 'Indefinite' or the *'Indesignate'* proposition that you, (the church) wish, for the subject of it is without a logical 'Sign' to show its *'quantity,'* that is to say, whether *all* of the objects described by the name 'Infants' is being spoken of, or whether only a portion of them is spoken of, in this proposition. If all the objects (that is *all* infants), are spoken of the 'sign' should be "All," "Every," "the whole of," or if a negative is used it should be "No" or "Not any of." But if only a portion of the objects ('infants') be spoken of, I indicate that fact by the 'sign' which indicates this—

'Some,' 'A few,' 'Many,' 'Most,' 'Almost all' or some others.

"And to be candid with you, I cannot endure these 'Indefinite' or 'Indesignate' subjects. I abhor and detest them, because ~~they are,~~ they breed so many misunderstandings among those who discuss questions. My friend Jevons for example with my approval advises every logical reasoner to avoid all discussions in which these 'Indesignate' subjects are found. (See Hill's Jevons' Logic, p. 69.) And my greatly trusted friend Hamilton, (who by the way was an Elder in the Scottish church) goes even further by saying that whenever a reasoner employs an 'Indesignate subject,' he really and necessarily speaks of only a portion of that subject. And I agree with him in this statement. You (the church) are perfectly honest as to your *impressions* and your *intention; morally* you are innocent of all harm, but *logically speaking,* you cannot being human escape from the silent power of those 'Laws of Thought' which it is my business to discover and expound. I did not *make* these 'Laws of Thought.' It was God who placed them in the human mind when he created man. He made them and I (Logic) expound them. My friend, and your *son,* Hamilton is right when he says that you *can* only use part of the objects expressed by the name, so long as you fail to *'quantify'* your subject by giving it one of my 'signs.' I advise you to say, for clearness and reaching a common ground of agreement, whether this subject ('Infants') is "All" or "Some." You say that your information justifies you in *hoping* or in believing that all such infants as die in their infancy are saved by Christ. Very well then, why don't you say so? If you find that God has only seen fit to give you this information in a probable form, all right. Do you only *re*-state it exactly as he states it. I will take pleasure in showing you how to do it, if you will only accept of my services?"

So much for Logic. She is a dogmatical old lady, but very serviceable if only you will let her have her way, as most women like very well to do.

4. *In What Form Then Does God Give Us This Information In His Holy Word? Let Us Look At It.*

In complying with this natural and religious wish for light from its supernal source, I shall not scruple to ask you to join me in using some excellent work of Dr. Webb which is recorded in his useful volume: *"The Theology of Infant Salvation," Chap. II, entitled: "Scripture Data,"* pp 11-44. In the section under the caption "SAVED INFANTS," Dr. W. extracts from God's holy word no less than eighteen (18) instances that he judges to belong to this class. The list begins with Abel and ends with the child Jesus. Perhaps a little more attention given to the nature and rules of the Inductive Process would bring out more fully the force of this argument. Let us see if this is so.

(1) First, then, it may be that a critical examination will diminish somewhat from the number of instances inserted by Dr. Webb. But if this should be true, I am fully assured that a sufficient number will be left to form the basis of a strong and thoroughly scientific induction. The reader will do well to examine the scriptural records for himself, but he will find Dr. Webb's suggestions to be *very* helpful indeed in making up his mind.

2. The instance of the Infant Saviour is, as Dr. Webb clearly indicates one with strongly marked peculiarities. Yet it certainly has a real bearing on the question of Infant Salvation. And speaking for one having deep reasons of a personal nature to be interested in the subject, I am thankful to Dr. Webb for calling my attention

to this instance. It shall have separate attention when the other cases shall have been disposed of.

3. The seventeeen remaining instances under the caption: "Saved Infants," are as follows: (1) *Abel and Seth* (Gen. 14, 4; 4, 26; Matt., 23, 25; Heb. 11, 4. (2) *Isaac* (Gen. 17, 19-21.) (3) *Jacob* (Rom. 11, 10-12.) (4) *Moses,* (Ex. 2, 2; Acts 7, 20; Heb. 11, 23.) (5) *Samson,* (Judy. 13; Heb. 11, 32.) (6) *Samuel* (1 Sam. 1, 27; 2, 18) (7) *David,* (Ps. 22, 9; 71, 6; 139, 13.) (8) *David's Child* (2 Sam. 12, 23.) (9) *Josiah,* (1 Ki. 13, 2; 2 Ki. 22, 1, 2.) (10) *Jeroboam's Child,* (1 Ki. 14, 12, 13.) (11) *Child of Widow of Tarephath,* (1 Ki. 17, 22.) (12) *Child of the Shunemite,* (2 Ki. 4, 35.) (13) *Isaiah,* (Isai. 49, 1, 5.) (14) *Jeremiah,* (Jer. 1, 5.) (15) *John the Baptist* (LK. 1, 15.) (16) *Paul,* (Gal. 1, 15-17.) (17) *Timothy,* (2 Tim. 3, 15.) As has already been suggested one seeking full information on this deply interesting subject will do well to consult Dr. Webb's comments, and to note the subsidiary texts that he cites as expository of the principal ones. And of course any good commentary would be more or less helpful, though the mind of our commentators are turned rather to other spiritual lessons than to that of Infant Salvation.

Now it is proposed to bring the Inductive Process to bear upon this array of "Saved Infants" that we may see what conclusion we are authorized to draw as *"good and necessary consequences from Scripture."* As to the Inductive Process itself, it is hardly necessary to say that it has proven to be an instrument in the hands of science more potent far than any magic wand which the poetic imagination has ever placed in the hand of enchanters and sorcerers. Speaking largely Scientific Induction proceeds from the *known to the unknown* in Nature. Its fundamental principle as set forth in Thomson, Por-

ter, Flint and other writers is that Nature is pervaded through and through by Wisdom and Intelligence. It is in a word a *kosmos,* or system of order and beauty. And hence the Rule of Induction: *When one thing is found to resemble another in important particulars, it is safe to infer that they are also alike in other important particulars, which lie beyond the immediate reach of our senses.*

It is by the use of this mighty instrument that Science has unlocked so many of Nature's curious cabinets and displayed their wonderful contents to the world. But moreover, there is also an *"Inductive Process of the common life,"* which is freely used by all mankind though most of them may not be acquainted with the *name of the process.* By this reasoning the hunter finds his game and the fisherman determines where to cast his line or nets in this or that condition of the tide. On the indications of this Process all of us do not hesitate to direct our business ventures and to risk in a large measure our happiness, our health and even life itself.

In handling the question of the salvation of children who die in their infancy as it may be affected by the instances of "Saved Infants" recorded in Scripture, we proceed from the *known* to the *unknown.* These recorded cases are found upon attentive inspection to present certain important resemblances to those cases of "children who die in their infancy." (1) Like those dying in infancy these recorded instances have incurred sin by Adam's fall and are spiritually ruined. (2) By this calamity the recorded instances like the others, are *guilty* and *polluted.* (3) *As guilty,* both classes of infants need redemption through Christ. (4) As *polluted* they need regeneration by the Spirit. (5) As fallen, both classes have become liable to pain and death. (6) And being liable to pain and death, both classes equally

need an exercise of Christ's power to raise them in the last day to the glorified state enjoyed by soul and body forever in heaven. (7) Both classes of infants must depend for these great gifts upon the sovereign electing grace of God. (8) Both classes are alike incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. (9) And both classes are alike incapable of exhibiting to human faculties the acts of faith and repentance.

Such are some of the principal "resemblances" between the two classes of infants. They are both numerous and of fundamental character. *They lie directly in the plane of Spiritual life to which we are now proceeding.* They are the recorded *"observations"* of a witness infallible as to his knowledge, and unimpeachable as to his character, even the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures. And inasmuch as it is time that in all similar inductions science is assured of her inferences in proportion to the *number* and the *quality* of the resemblances, we have here a very strong ground for *believing*—as science also believes—our conclusion that children dying in their infancy are like those "Saved Infants" in being received into God's mercy through His Son, our Lord and Redeemer. You and I probably have risked health and life itself many a time on resemblances far less clear and fundamental than these.

Now as to the special case of the child Jesus, in applying the Inductive Process to the matter of Infant Salvation, we should move along this track—

(1) The child of the virgin-mother being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, was saved entirely from any participation in Adam's fall, which includes only such persons as are descended by ordinary generation.

(2) By the same power he was saved from all personal guilt and pollution, from obligation to pain and death, and as a sinless being, he by his nature enjoyed that union and communion with God the Father which Adam enjoyed in Eden and which holy angels enjoy in heaven.

(3) And these facts being established, Augustine was justified in saying that the Man Christ Jesus was himself an illustrious example of God's electing, sovereign grace. He was elected not out of the sinful mass, but out of the whole entire human race as God had planned to create it.

Now, it is entirely practicable to apply these resemblances Inductively to the case of infants saved in their infancy, whether they die or live.

The child Jesus was saved from all *consequences* of Adam's fall (as well as from the fall itself) and so are these infants saved from the *consequences* of Adam's fall. The comparison can be run out into details by any one who will think carefully.

2. Dr. Webb also collates for us the facts as to our Lord's reception of little children when brought to Him by loving hands. The synoptic Gospels when carefully compared (Matt. 19, 14 and 15; Mk. 10, 13-16; Lk. 18, 16 and 17,) give us the enchanting picture in its details. It is the *locus classicus* on the subject of the relations of infants to their Redeemer. Beautiful are the comments cited by Dr. Webb from Bengel, Stier and beyond all others from Calvin, who is charged erroneously of holding harsh opinions on this matter, from which Dr. Webb ably vindicates him. Some things fell from the great Genevan in the stress and heat of controversy which perhaps need qualification. But when he came reverently

and calmly into the presence of the Master blessing little children his heart overflows with the contagious love that burned in the Redeemer's soul. As we look upon the scene the question rises unbidden to the lips: "Did Christ not think, as He rebuked the meddlesome disciples and drew the precious darlings to His bosom—did He not think then of the fact that in them He was to receive the vastly greater proportion of His reward?"

But to the application of the Inductive Process, for the comments of Dr. Webb and his distinguished company should be read in his useful volume. Only there can they be fully enjoyed—Induction would say: *"Inasmuch as these infants received and blessed by the Redeemer are closely like the case of such infants as die in their infancy in many and fundamental particulars,* therefore, it is safe to infer that they are also alike in showing the grace *of Christ that brings Salvation."*

Shall we join in observing some of these important resemblances?

(1) In both cases the infants share in Adam's fall.

(2) In both they require a Redeemer to atone.

(3) In both they need regeneration by the Spirit.

(4) In both they are incapable of manifesting faith and repentance.

(5) In both they require the intervention of the Son of God to raise and glorify them at the last day. The resemblances are many and they are of fundamental character. The observations are made and recorded by the Holy Spirit and are therefore reliable in the highest degree. But the Lord testifies of one class that they possess this additional mark that: "Of such (children) is the Kingdom of Heaven." (For the discourse is of infants literally and primarily. He was indignant when infants were about to be withheld from him.) *Now*

therefore we are justified in inferring that the two classes of infants are also alike in sharing the Kingdom of Heaven. This is a valid Induction.

3. A third instance in point may also be borrowed from Dr. Webb. It is also of common occurrence in other writers. It is the contrasted instance of persons declared in Scripture to be condemned and sent away to punishment in the last judgment.

The Inductive Process takes this shape, (for be it remembered that science so applies it to establish what future events will happen—the sun rising tomorrow, the phases of the moon, eclipses, tides, etc.) "The instances of persons condemned in the last day have, every one of them, this mark as they are recorded in the Scriptures; *namely,* they that are charged and sentenced as guilty of *evil deeds done in the body.* But no child dying in its infancy can thus be charged with evil deeds done in the body. And consequently we may safely exclude all such infants as die in infancy from the class of persons condemned in the last judgment.

The Inductive syllogism is valid in form and proceeds *from the known to the unknown* exactly as the Scientific process does by which one object (an animal perhaps,) is excluded from a certain *genus* or *species.*

What then is the fair rational estimate to be placed upon these Scripture Inductions? If they were cases of investigation in Zoology, for example, of what value would Science consider them? Cuvier, the great Naturalist, was able, as we know, by similar Inductive Processes to restore an animal body that he had never seen from the resemblances found by his practised eye in a single bone. He could safely conclude what was the food of this unknown creature—its shape, its weapons of defence or attack, its size and shape. That he was not romancing

was fully demonstrated by the discovery afterwards of such skeletons or living things *as had that bone in them.*

What then shall we say of these Scripture Inductions?

(1) They seem to add nothing whatever to what "is written." They interpret, but do not import into God's word facts or principles from extraneous.

(2) They are *"consequences from Scripture"* derived by a process used by mankind every day and hour of their lives, with regard to common life—used even when our happiness, our health and our lives are necessarily involved. They are used by the scientists as his well known and amply verified means of unraveling the mysteries of Nature. They are *"good and necessary consequences"* in the sense and to the same degree that Inductions of the common life and of Science are. All such share the elements of *Probability"*—so Logic declares and so common sense agrees. Practically they can become, and do become *certainties.* We are sure for example that the sun will rise at a certain time tomorrow. We could live and act as rational beings, if we did not believe this Inductive conclusion and many others. Yes, *innumerable others*—just like it. Still they are probable truths; some more probable, some less so. The conclusion that all infants dying in their infancy are saved by Christ belongs to this class. In establishing it, three separate lines of Induction have been advanced and applied. They do not exhaust the material found in Scripture. But they seem to be sufficient. Do we doubt and tremble lest the earth shall cease to turn on her axis, and thus we shall be disappointed in our hope of another sunrise? No, we do not. But causes are known which might at any hour interrupt the long-continued process of ~~testimonial~~ terrestrial revolution. The collision of meteoric mat-

ter in a sufficient mass might effect this disaster. Smaller masses constantly infringe upon the earth—none however of sufficient mass has yet done so. An explosion of sufficient magnitude and force in the sun itself might prevent in a different way the sunrise. Similar explosions do take place but none has occurred at least in a very long time to turn the ball of the sun into nebulous matter. And so we confidently *believe* in another sunrise, for it is a matter of faith after all.

And in like manner we rest in our orderly Inductions based wholly on the infallible Word of God. Several of them are seen in this brief sketch to *converge* upon a common center which is: "All children dying in their infancy are saved by Christ." Let us believe and be at peace.

But thus believing on good grounds this blessed truth which gives one half of our fallen race to Christ to be saved by His blood and regenerated by His spirit, why hesitate and higgle about saying so in our Confession? We all claim that we hold exactly such a belief or faith as this. We hold only because God has given us in His Word exactly this information concerning the children who die in their infancy. Our creed is just what we name it—a collection of the things believed by us. Our Confession of Faith is just exactly what its name implies—a confession of our faith as to this, that and the other matter which we find in the Scripture either given in express words or else deduced "by good and necessary consequence from Scripture."

To many among us if not to all, it seems that, inasmuch as we have a "well-assured hope," or as we are "amply warranted in believing" that all such infants as die in their infancy are saved by Christ, we owe it to Him to say so in our Creed as well as in every other way. It announces the salvation of the far greater part of all per-

sons who have ever been saved to this hour, of all who are being saved at present, and in all probability of all who ever will be saved. It is far and away the largest source of the "multitude which no man" can number in heaven. To omit mention of it, fully and freely as God gives it to us in His Holy Word, is to misconceive the work wrought by our Savior for our sin-cursed race. The glory of God is certainly concerned in the manner of stating this particular information as He has seen fit to insert into His Word, which we claim as our "Supreme Standard" of faith and duty. The Confession is related to the Holy Word somewhat as our moon is to the sun. She has light only as he shines upon her. And it seems to be a pity that because a certain piece of information—a certain light from the sun—does not shine a certain "positive" way, as some speak, therefore our little moon will not be permitted to reflect it at all. But if "positive" be allowed to signify: *that which is really and truly taught in the Scriptures,* all our difficulties are happily disposed of, and our creed can re-echo the exact voice of the Lord.

POSTSCRIPTUM.

Since the manuscript was sent to the printer it has been discovered that a long-standing objection was accidentally overlooked. It maintains that such an amendment would be out of order in Chap. X which treats of "Effectual Calling," not of "Election."

Perhaps a sufficient reply would be that "The Elect Infant Clause" itself assigns to election the leading place by writing the predicate "Elect" before, instead of after its subject, "Infants." And by the same dislocation the logical meaning of the clause was obscured and confused. In the absence of positive information one can think of no cause for such an unusual sequence in the words so likely as a compromise vote in the Westminister Assembly. And the well known sentiments of Dr. Twisse, the Prolocutor, would agree with this explanation.

However, the criticism can be further obviated by such a change in the order of the words as this:

> "All children who die in their infancy, being in the sovereign, electing grace of God given to Christ, as we confidently believe, are saved by His blood and regenerated by His Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth."

In this simple way the clauses can be brought into complete harmony with the design of the chapter—which is more than can be said of the present phraseology as it now stands.

Dr. Webb in a personal letter suggests this substitute on the ground that it makes the least change in the confession — "Infants dying in infancy, being elect, are regenerated and saved ~~through~~ by Christ through the Spirit who worketh" Etc. Here also we have the "indesignate imposition" of th. Logic above. But in this rendering the sign "All" seems to be implied. Is it not better to write it, if true?

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